

## Christmas Island

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# Christmas Island

by [OldeScratch](#)

## Summary

Wilbur Soot hated Christmas.

He despised Christmas. He loathed it.

Christmas always meant being shoved aside for the biological children and scrambling for scraps and getting cheap, one dollar toys that either broke or got broken.

This resentment crossed into his life even after he'd been adopted by Phil, who was arguably one of the best people Wilbur had ever had the pleasure of even meeting.

He didn't force Wilbur to celebrate Christmas, like other houses, or push him aside when he later adopted an American named Techno who, while wary, participated in some of the festivities.

Every December first, Phil would put up minimal decorations for Wilbur's sake, mostly putting things up inside his own and Techno's room.

(It didn't mean Wilbur didn't want to know what it felt like to tear into wrapping paper. It always looked fun when the other kids did it.)

(Or, Wilbur hates Christmas so much it's taken a more than serious toll on his mental health.

So, his adopted Goddess of Death mother has to send some ghosts to cheer him up.)

[Same universe as my other fic, Deathlessness, but this also works as a standalone fic!]

## Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

# i almost made it through a year of choking down my fears

## Chapter Notes

fic title from "Christmas Island" by AJJ

(strange that the song "Christmas Island" isn't in the album "Christmas Island")

chapter title from "Linda Rondstat" by AJJ

(cw for arguments, mentions of suicide)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

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(Wilbur had learned to fear the scent of pine-scented candles. At least Phil took it as an asthma thing rather than that and an abuse thing.)

Phil and Techno only ever wished Wilbur a "*Happy Holidays!*" instead of a "*Merry Christmas!*", which he supposed was tolerable enough.

They each got him a few gifts every Christmas, but always wrote them off as whatever-gifts. Or, presents given just because they felt like it rather than a holiday. Never wrapped, maybe with a bow on it that could be written off as just one of celebration.

(It didn't mean Wilbur didn't want to know what it felt like to tear into wrapping paper. It always looked fun when the other kids did it.)

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"Only a few days til Christmas," Phil murmured to Techno over breakfast. "You sure you're not gonna redo your roots for pictures?"

Techno shrugged at the edge of Wilbur's vision. "Eh. I've only got a bit of bleach left, and I'd rather save it til they get a bit worse. You can hardly see 'em as they are now."

Phil hummed. "Yeah, I guess. Hey, Wilbur, you said you were going out later, right?"

Wilbur let out a grunt of agreement, scooping up a bit of cereal.

"Don't forget your scarf. It's chilly outside this time of year, and I don't want you getting sick. Keys should be by the TV, if you wanna take the car. So, Techno, about the Dream Team=="

"Don't call them that, you'll stroke their ego=="

Wilbur shut the door behind him after barking out a goodbye, barely giving Phil and Techno a time to react. He felt for his inhaler in his pocket, nestled into his scarf--Phil had bought it as a not-Christmas present last year--and let out a deep breath.

Fog swirled around his face, disappearing into cold air.

Wilbur wrinkled his nose and began the trudge to town.

He wasn't sure why they needed to move out to the middle of *nowhere* on a farm they were never gonna use, but he wasn't the one paying for the house, so whatever.

---

The town was busy as ever, Wilbur observed as he stopped to take a break. He'd *walked*, yes, but his lungs decided to hate him today.

People rushed about, bundled in coats and hanging on tight to the hands of children. Slush crunched beneath their feet, the odd car passing and driving through mush.

*I just need new earbuds*, Wilbur told himself, preparing for the barrage of "Merry Christmas"es. *Just nod and smile and maybe say Happy Holidays*.

He took a deep breath, adjusted his glasses--not that he needed them, but the glass sometimes protected his eyes from sudden onslaughts of wind--and marched into the fray.

A man passed him, talking into his phone as he clutched onto a baby.

Wilbur swerved around him, tucking himself further into his trenchcoat and pulling his beanie down.

A woman strutted in the opposite direction, her bright red coat swishing behind her.

He sidestepped around a child.

*"I'm telling you, those little gingerbread men from America are amazing=="* one girl said to her friend, both sporting faux fur coats and earmuffs.

*The store restocked this morning,* Wilbur repeated, ears buzzing. *If I'm quick, I can get the last pair.*

*"==ry Chris=="*

He nearly slipped on a bit of ice.

Someone hummed a Christmas song as they passed, a wire dangling from their ear as they moved around Wilbur.

Wilbur darted into the shop the moment he saw the familiar text on the door, a jingle to signify his entrance.

He coughed into his elbow, rubbing his gloveless hands together to warm his frozen fingers.

"Hello, Wilbur!" chirped the store attendant, Sam (another American, this one with green hair and a medical mask usually on), before going back to the customer at the register.

Wilbur continued to rub his hands together as he stomped the snow out of his shoes onto the mat. He stepped away from the entrance into the warmth of the store.

The shop itself was an electronics shop, and one of the best in the area. They didn't sell brand-new, high-end tech, as most of what they had was recycled, but they sold earbuds and such that had never been opened that they got from overstock. Granted, they weren't the best quality earbuds, but Wilbur was *not* about to make the trek down to the opposite side of town to get better ones. Not during Christmas.

Wilbur blew warm air into his cupped hands, feeling beginning to return to his fingertips. He stepped over near where the line would have been, searching for the small shelf that usually held earbuds and headphones.

He flicked his gaze down the line, looking for his target.

He looked again.

And again.

"Thank you, come again!" Sam said to the customer. "Happy Holidays!"

"Happy Holidays!" they called back before disappearing in a flurry of cold air and a jingle of a bell.

Sam turned back to Wilbur. "Weird to see you out-and-about during this time. What're you lookin' for?"

"Earbuds," Wilbur said, scanning the shelves again. "You got a shipment this morning, right?"

Unbeknownst to Wilbur, Sam grimaced. "Uh... yeah, those sold out earlier."

Wilbur turned to him, a look of disbelief on his face. "You're kidding. *Everything?*"

Sam nodded helplessly.

Wilbur looked back at the shelves. He heaved a sigh. "Fine. Thanks, anyways."

Sam nodded to him as he turned to leave. "Hap==Have a good day, Wilbur! And get some gloves before you get frostbite."

The door was yanked open before it shut with a little jingle.

Wilbur jerked back as he ran into something, ending up sneering down at someone who might have been fifteen or sixteenish, wearing a purple hoodie with gray-blond hair. "Watch it, kid," he snapped as he left, ignoring the cold that bit at his fingers.

(Purpled rolled his eyes as he entered the store, using his gloved hands to push the cold metal.)

---

Wilbur arrived home *hours* later, shivering, upset, and pissed the fuck off.

"Hey, mate!" Phil chirped from the couch, Techno at his side. He paused whatever movie they were watching. "You're back late. Everything alright?"

Wilbur bit back a shout that *no*, everything was not *alright*. "I went out for earbuds because mine were broken. And Sam didn't have any, cause they all sold out, so I walked *all the way to the other side of town* and went into *three shops* and I couldn't find *any*."

Techno quirked an eyebrow at him, reaching up to readjust the ponytail his hair had been pulled into. "Earbuds? And you couldn't find any at all?"

Wilbur yanked his boots off and tossed them to the side. "Fuck off, Techno," he grit out.

Techno raised a hand in surrender, one busy holding a mug. "'S just surprisin' is all."

Wilbur brushed past them up the creaky stairs, tugging off his beanie and coat to toss in a corner.

(Techno and Phil heard the top step creak and Wilbur's door slam shut.

"He's gonna be fun to call back down for dinner," Phil murmured.

Techno hummed.

A harsh gust of wind shook the house, accompanied by a scream-like sound.

Phil winced. "Good thing Wilbur got home in time. Sounds like a nasty storm."

Techno shifted the blanket in his lap. "Just press play.")

---

(Wilbur buried his head under his pillow, still able to hear Phil and Techno's movie from downstairs.

*"You will be visited by Three Spirits. Expect the first to-night, when the bell tolls One. Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The third, upon the next night, when the last stroke of Twelve has ceased ticking."*

Wilbur tore his door open and shouted down a quick, *"For the love of God, turn your fucking movie down!"*

Techno and Phil jolted in surprise before the door slammed back shut.

Phil looked to Techno from where he was inserting a new CD into the empty slot, Techno having been making more hot cocoa. "What's his problem?"

Techno shrugged, staring discontentedly down at the pool of hot cocoa that had spilled. "Now I have to get a towel...")

---

Wilbur hated Christmas. But one thing he hated more was the arguments he and Techno tended to get into around this time.

"If you'd stop bein' so mopey and at least *tried* to help yourself—" Techno snarled over dinner that night.

Phil tried to cut him off with a sharp, "*Techno*."

"You don't get to tell me what to fuckin' do," Wilbur shot back, glaring daggers across the small kitchen table. "You have no *idea* what I went through."

"I was in foster care, too, so I think I have a decent idea."

"Boys=="

"I don't think you realize how much of a fucking *dick* you're being right now."

"Oh, I know! I know I'm being a dick. But you're being an inconsiderate *asshole* who would rather hide away in his room every Christmas instead of facing your problems and spending time with your family. You know, the people who spend every December worrying if this'll be the year you==" Techno stopped himself.

"The year I what, Techno?" Wilbur prompted. "Go on, say it. The year I *what*?"

"We're worried about you!" Techno said, instead of finishing his statement. "Sue me for not wanting you to be miserable!"

"I didn't *ask you* to worry about me!" Wilbur finally yelled, slamming his hands on the table and standing. His chair slid across the floor.

Techno stood up, too. "It comes with being family, idiot!"

"Then maybe I should have said no!"

"*Wilbur!*" Phil finally interrupted in a shout, springing to his feet.

Wilbur turned to leave, kicking his chair on the way out.

Phil and Techno didn't try to stop him.

Wilbur could feel horror seep into his bones by the time he'd made it to the stairs. Yet his feet carried him onwards, up into his room before his arms shut his door behind him.

He took a deep breath when the room around him had settled. It was shaky, at best, and he took another.

No sound came from downstairs.

He let out a sniff. His sweater sleeve==light blue, with some graphic design on the front==came up to wipe away what he refused to be a tear.

extra credits from the discord:

toby - sound director

violet - producer

# in the days before the damage

## Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Temple Grandin" by AJJ

(cw for murder, nightmares)

Wilbur stayed up late that night.

He hadn't heard Phil and Techno retire to their rooms. He assumed they were downstairs, still, probably doing *Christmas things* without him.

Christmas, Wilbur decided, was getting worse and worse by the minute.

The digital clock on his desk stared back at him, showing it was nearly one in the morning.

Wilbur shut his eyes, despite knowing he wasn't going to get any sleep.

He swore he could hear the clock tick over to one.

Light flashed upon the room in an instant, shocking Wilbur into sitting up, adrenaline pumping into his veins.

Before his bed stood a figure, half-doused in darkness. It stood tall, looming over his bed, its knotted blond hair barely covering gray eyes that stared down at him. Skin as pale as paper clung to the figure's inhumanely thin frame, contrasting against a faded red jacket, brown pants, and dirt stuck on its bare feet.

Wait hold on==

The thing wasn't *before* his bed. It was *on* it! With disgusting shoeless feet!

"Get your feet off my bed!" Wilbur cried, kicking out at it.

The person yelped and jumped back, nearly tumbling off the bed before it caught itself. Now that it was standing on the ground, Wilbur realized it couldn't have been any taller than him. "What the fuck, man?!"

"Your feet are absolutely disgusting, there is no way you're going to dirty up my sheets with those!" Wilbur pulled his blankets closer. "Who even are you? How did you get in here? Why didn't I hear you?"

The person crossed his arms. "Calm your shit, bitch! I'm the Ghost of Christmas Past, and I'm here to help you."

Wilbur stared at him.

The "ghost" stared back.

"I'm sorry==no, I'm not==what?"

They scoffed. "Are you deaf? I'm the Ghost of Christmas Past, and I'm here to help you? Didn't you hear the warning?"

"What *warning*?"

"*You will be visited by Three Ghosts, one will come to-night, when the clock strikes one, blah blah blah.* Somethin' like that?"

Wilbur gave a light shake of his head. "Oh, my god, I've been drugged..."

They let out a harsh bark of laughter. "Drugs are not very pog, Wilbur. My friend, he's a wrongun==he was addicted to drugs, and he jumped off a roof."

Huh.

Yeah, no, his dinner had *definitely* been laced with something.

The person moved around to his side of the bed, tugging at his arm with ferocity. "Come on, you bitch, outta bed, I've got a job to do=="

Wilbur attempted to yank his arm back, but for someone who looked like their bones were made of popsicle sticks, they were *strong*. "Hey==no, no, no==let me go==! Phil! Techno!"

"Wilbur!" the self-proclaimed ghost added. At Wilbur's strange look, they said, "Just completing your list."

Wilbur finally yanked his arm out of the stranger's grasp. "Leave me alone!"

"But *Wilbah*, I need to do my *job*." They hummed. "Is it cause you don't know my name? Well, I'm Tommy Danger Kraken Careful Innit, the Ghost of Christmas Past."

Wilbur stared at him. "There is no way that's your name."

"It *is*!" Tommy protested. "Nobody ever *believes* me! It's right there, on my birth certificate!"

"And where's your birth certificate?"

Tommy looked off in thought for a moment before he angled his gaze up. "Probably somewhere in the attic... Oh, yeah, it's in the crates. I used to live here," he added at Wilbur's puzzled expression.

Wilbur raised an eyebrow at him. "So, if I go up there, and I check every box=="

"Crate."

"==*crate*, then I'll find a birth certificate that says *Tommy Danger Kraken Careful Innit?*"

"Sure will, big man."

Wilbur slid out of bed, prepared to head up to the attic just to prove the stranger wrong and perhaps catch someone's attention==

"But first, my thing!"

Tommy latched onto his arm and *yanked* him towards a wall, dragging him towards it==

Wilbur shut his eyes as he stumbled along, unable to regain his footing to fight back==

He felt something pass through him before the sounds of a... train station flooded his ears?

Wilbur peeked his eyes open, finding a busy underground train station, packed with people waiting to get onto the train. Polished floors had been streaked with slush, Christmas songs playing softly over the speakers, one light in the far corner broken.

Oh, *shit*==

"This isn't what I think it is, is it?" he muttered.

Tommy continued to drag him closer to the platform, people moving aside as if to part like a sea.

Wilbur could only follow in numb disbelief.

They arrived before a portly man, covered in his brown coat. Black jeans covered his legs from the cold, disappearing into black boots. A red scarf tied itself around his neck, a matching pair of gloves covering his cold fingers.

"He's the guy, right?" Tommy asked.

Wilbur nodded wordlessly.

"What was he like?" Tommy sniffed. "Looks like a right asterbar, he does."

Wilbur swallowed. "Well, uh=="

(It occurred to him that despite the obvious chill plaguing the people around them, he was still just as warm as he was back in his room. It must have been some kind of fever dream, then==)

"He was... nice, I suppose. But not kind. He would let me==us foster kids, he'd let us play with his actual children. And his wife would knit us little things to put our drinks on during dinner..."

The music cut out briefly to allow some kind of slurred speech to spill out. It cut off, and the music returned.

"We had to share a bedroom, but that was expected. I don't remember anyone else's names, but I'm sure I was close with one."

"What did you mean *nice, but not kind*?" prompted Tommy as the man glanced over his shoulder.

"I mean..." Wilbur shrugged. "He treated us more like *extended house guests* than children. And==" He swallowed. "And they were really focused on the whole *natural medicine* thing. So, they didn't let me have my inhaler..."

"How'd you get out of there? Tell a=a counselor-person?"

Wilbur shook his head. "I... I had a really bad asthma attack one day. And while *she* was trying to use essential oils and shit to 'help', one of the other foster kids suddenly gained a braincell and called the police. Last I heard, she was in the process of getting their foster license revoked and facing potential jailtime for, uh... reckless endangerment? No, wait..."

"She?" Tommy prompted. "Not they?"

Wilbur gestured helplessly to the side, where another version of him, a bit shorter than he was now, was sprinting towards the man with a fresh bottle of water.

"Does something happen on the train?" Tommy asked.

Wilbur could only wring his hands together. "I don't wanna be here anymore, Tommy."

"Is this why you hate Christmas?"

"Tommy=="

The little him *crashed* into his foster dad.

"*Get me out of here==*"

His foster dad went flailing, tripping into the platform.

"Mr==!" Wilbur tried to cry out before the screams of other patrons drowned him out.

"You did that on *purpose*?" Tommy stressed.

Wilbur covered his ears to block out his own screams, the calls for other patrons as someone yelled to stop the train==

"*Get me out, get me out, get me out!*"

The sound of a train barreling towards them reached Wilbur's covered ears==

---

"Wilbur!"

Wilbur shot up with a shout, not noticing as someone jerked out of his way. His clothes stuck to him as he looked around wildly.

He was in his bedroom.

He wasn't in that *fucking* train station anymore.

"Wilbur?" Phil called from Wilbur's bedside.

Wilbur whipped around towards him, finding Phil and Techno stood over him, both with varying amounts of worry. He tried to swallow down a gulp of air, only to find it harder than he remembered it.

"Are you okay?" Phil asked, forehead creased. "We heard you having a nightmare."

Wilbur's chest stuttered. "I—" he tried, only for his lungs to fail him.

Techno glanced to his bedside table and grabbed at something, holding it out to Wilbur.

Wilbur took the inhaler and brought it to his mouth, quickly activating it and sighing when his throat relaxed. He took it away and coughed, feeling his heart still threaten to beat out of his chest.

"I'll go get you some water," Phil said, moving to leave the room. "I'll be right back."

Phil left the room, leaving him and Techno alone in silence.

Wilbur coughed again when he was gone, pushing sweat-sticky hair away from his forehead. He sniffed and slumped over himself, clutching the inhaler.

"Are you, like..." Techno started, only to stop. "Um... How bad was it?"

Wilbur shook his head. He'd rather *die* than admit he'd done that on purpose. He'd only just gotten over the guilt a few years ago, he didn't need it resurfacing.

The only sound that filled the room was Wilbur's stuttered breathing and Phil's rummaging around downstairs.

"Was it my fault?"

Wilbur looked up at Techno, confused. "Huh?"

Techno shrugged a shoulder, gaze focused not on Wilbur, but on the sweat stains he was drenched in.

"What==" Wilbur coughed. His voice sounded rough as he corrected, "What makes you think this is your fault?"

Techno pressed his lips into a thin line. "Just... with the whole argument earlier. I said some pretty bad things. I didn't want you to go to bed angry, but..."

*But I couldn't stand you*, went unspoken as the two fell back into silence.

"I'm sorry, by the way." Techno cleared his throat and shifted.

Wilbur hummed, running another hand through his hair. "M sorry, too," he managed out. "I just... can't *stand* Christmas..."

The stairs began to creak, signifying Phil's nearing arrival.

---

"You... want to go to the attic?" Phil asked the next morning over breakfast, having just got out cereal for everyone to pour. (Wilbur had changed his sheets last night, and they were now in a laundry bin beside the washer and dryer.)

Wilbur nodded. "Yeah. I just wanna see what's up there, y'know?"

Techno "uhh"ed. "Wilbur, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you're literally the least suited out of all of us to go into a dusty attic."

"I was fine when Dream, Sapnap, and George brought us up there!" Wilbur protested. "Besides, I'm an adult, and I can do what I want. I'll wear a mask."

"Because they'd already disturbed most of what we'd be walking through?" Techno more asked than corrected.

Phil sighed. "You can go in the attic, but just be careful, alright? And bring your inhaler."

So, Wilbur made his way into the attic, a cloth mask on his face and his inhaler secure in the pocket of his sweatpants.

He adjusted the hem of the hoodie he wore, pulling it down from where it had ridden up on his way the ladder.

*Crates*, the spirit had specified. His stuff was in *crates*.

Wilbur carefully made his way around the attic, fumbling about in the near-dark, trying his best not to kick up too much dust.

He passed a rotting cardboard box that had what looked like books on beekeeping inside when he finally caught sight of them.

The crates, dustier than anything else in the attic, shoved into a corner.

Wilbur could hear his heartbeat.

He knelt beside the crates, wincing as his knees dug into the hardwood floor. He ensured the mask was on well enough before he slowly slotted the top of one of the three crates off.

A wave of dust flew up, staining the air and making Wilbur jerk back.

He used his hand to wave away the dust before he leaned back over, peering within the crate.

The first thing he noticed was a stack of framed pictures, family members lined up in front of the farm. The picture itself was a grainy black-and-white, with a handful of dust overtop making it harder to make out.

Beside it was a collection of documents, which Wilbur carefully pulled out and began to look through.

Most of it appeared to be old deeds and transactions, nothing of interest.

He was down to the final few pages when he stopped dead in his tracks.

A birth certificate stared back at him.

*Tommy Danger Kraken Careful Innit. Born on April 9th, 1920.*

Wilbur reread the writing again, just to confirm he was seeing correctly. Then he read it again. And again.

"What the fuck...?" he muttered.

Okay. So, um.

*What the fuck.*

Wilbur placed the back of his wrist to his forehead, his fingers covered in dust.

He took a deep breath. Then another, and another.

He put all the papers back together. He slotted them back into their crate. He closed the crate, stood up, and left the attic.

# hating you won't make you suck any less

## Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Kokopelli Face Tattoo" by AJJ

(cw for mentions of suicide/depression)

Wilbur didn't believe in ghosts.

And yet, what other explanation did he *have*?!

Some kid who looked like he froze to death had broken into the house, pulled Wilbur through a wall, sent him back to the worse mistake of his life, and then stored some fake birth certificate in his attic?

How would==

Wilbur sighed for the nth time that day. Night.

Whatever.

It was almost one in the morning, he was tired, and hungry (he'd been too busy thinking to go down for lunch or dinner), and he could hear Phil and Techno binging Christmas movies downstairs.

Wilbur shoved the pillow over his head.

He just... He just needed sleep. He just had a strange dream yesterday--he'd heard about Tommy from Dream or Sapnap or George, cause they were ghost enthusiasts, and he hadn't remembered==

"Dude, are you even alive?"

Wilbur jolted up, pushing the pillow off him.

Near his window stood a lanky figure, with a suit hanging from their arms. They looked to be about as tall as Wilbur, with a half-black, half-white mask on their face, black sunglasses, and white streaks decorating half of their almost-black hair.

The figure jerked. "Ah! Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you. You good?"

Wilbur gaped at him. He blinked. "What the fuck."

"Oh! Right!" The ghost let out a nervous laugh, and Wilbur thought that he might have been giving a shaky grin. "I'm the Ghost of Christmas Present."

Wilbur opened his mouth. He closed it again.

"Did==" the Ghost faltered. "You saw the Ghost of Christmas Past yesterday, right?"

"Tommy?" Wilbur asked, for lack of anything better to say.

"Oh, he==he told you his name. Um. Alright, well, I'm Ranboo. I also lived in this house. I assume Tommy also said he lived here?"

Wilbur nodded.

"Alright. Welp, I'm Ranboo, and I'm gonna show you... the present. Cause I'm the Ghost of Christmas Present. Up you get."

Wilbur scrambled away when Ranboo reached forward. "Hold on! I'm not going out there in the cold."

Ranboo stared at him. "What? No, you're==You do realize you're kinda... dreaming?"

Wilbur furrowed his brows. "But..." He shook his head and tossed his blanket off, clambering out of bed. "Fine. Whatever. Let's get this over with."

Standing next to Ranboo made Wilbur realize he himself was barely an inch shorter than Ranboo, which kind of pissed him off.

"Alright. Downstairs we go!" Ranboo headed off towards the door.

"But Phil and Techno are down there!" Wilbur protested. "I don't wanna fuckin' deal with them right now."

Ranboo stared at him. He opened the door, leaned out, and shouted a quick, "*AYO!*"

Nothing happened.

Wilbur could hear the faintest sound of a TV, along with low conversation.

Ranboo looked back at him. He turned to the doorway. "*I'm gonna kill Wilbur if you don't say something!*"

"*Are you fucking crazy?!*" Wilbur found himself hissing.

"Yeah, how'd you know?!"

Still, there was no sound of footsteps running up the stairs. No shouts, no heightened voices...

Wilbur inched towards the door. "*Phil!*" he called down. "*Techno!*"

Nothing.

Ranboo waltzed out the door. "Alright, down we go!"

Wilbur hesitated before he followed him down. "Won't they see us?"

Their feet made no noise on the usually-creaky stairs.

Ranboo hopped down the last two steps to the landing. "Nope! Christmas magic."

Wilbur rolled his eyes and followed him down. When they arrived at the bottom, Ranboo walked out to hang around one of the armchairs while Wilbur peeked around the corner.

Phil and Techno sat on the large couch, bundled in the fluffiest blanket, donning comfy clothes and holding warm drinks. A candy cane hung from the edge of Techno's drink, dipping into the mug.

"If he wakes up screamin' again," Phil said, eyes focused on the live-action Grinch movie (the one with Jim Carrey in it) they were watching, "I'd be tempted to leave him."

Wilbur jolted, rounding the corner to gape at them. "Wha==Phil!"

Techno huffed into his drink. "What happened to unconditional love?"

"I still love him," Phil muttered, sounding offended like Techno would suggest otherwise, "but it's... tiring. I know December's tough for him, but I genuinely don't know why he hasn't gone to therapy yet. I've brought it up, but..."

With a hum, Techno took a sip. "He gets all mopey this time 'a year. I'm gettin' tired of it. He's my brother, but I don't recognize him around Christmas."

The two lapsed into silence, oblivious to Wilbur's horrified face.

"Now, hold on==" Wilbur began, "you don't get to say shit like that behind my back=="

"Well, that was grim," Phil said. He cleared his throat and gulped down a bit of his drink tiredly. He glanced at the clock and let out a guffaw. "It's nearly half-past one! It's officially Christmas Eve!"

Techno 'huh'ed. "Latest I've ever seen you stay up, old man."

Phil snorted. "Mate, I hope you know that I'm going to get back at you for that one day."

"And how, exactly, do you propose you'll do that?"

"Can't tell you, it'll ruin the surprise."

Techno rolled his eyes.

Wilbur looked between Ranboo and the two on the couch. "Are you fucking kidding me?!"

Ranboo raised his hands in surrender, cowering in on himself. "Dude=="

"They talk about me like this *behind my fucking back?!'*" Wilbur looked back to them. "You can't say you're fucking tired of me *behind my back!* If you've got a fucking problem with me hating this fucking holiday, then take it up with me! Don't *gossip* while watching Christmas movies!"

The two remained unphased, eyes glued to the screen.

"He doesn't have to like Christmas," Techno nearly whispered. "I just want him to like us despite it."

Wilbur glared at the two. "Ranboo," he began, turning on his heel, "I'm going back to bed. *Fuck* this."

Ranboo didn't reply.

---

Wilbur awoke in his own bed in a cold sweat, lungs begging for air.

Phil and Techno did not show up.

When Wilbur poked his head out into the hallway, he could hear the sound of the Grinch movie with Jim Carrey in it playing.

---

Wilbur didn't leave his room that day, despite the drying sweat clinging to it.

Phil knocked on his door for breakfast, but when there was no reply, he left.

Techno tried next, but Wilbur remained quiet.

It was about ten-ish when Phil came by again and said they were leaving for a bit and that he'd left a plate for him in the microwave.

Wilbur only buried himself further into his blankets.

He ended up only leaving his room when the silence became too much, He ate the food Techno had made and Phil had left for him, shifting uncomfortably in his seat.

(He was unused to eating alone after the years. He'd have to fix that if Phil and Techno found him so *unbearable*.)

Wilbur returned to his room shortly after, locking the door behind him.

Phil and Techno came back who-knows-how-long later.

*Knock-knock-knock!* "Wilbur?" came Phil's voice, muffled by the door.

For fuck's sake==

Wilbur shoved his face further into his pillow.

The room fell into silence.

*"Wilbur, are you awake?"*

The knob turned, only to stop when he found it locked.

*"Wilbur?!"* Phil called, sounding worried now. *"Wilbur, are you okay?"*

Wilbur felt the backs of his eyes begin to burn.

Phil called for Techno, who came bounding up the stairs. A few other doors opened, likely to check if Wilbur had locked his door as some kind of distraction.

Techno knocked on his door, quicker than Phil's, but certainly heavier. *"Wilbur!"*

*"Fuck off!"* he shouted back.

The two went silent.

*"Wilbur, we're just worried,"* Phil said. *"Can you open the door, mate? Please?"*

*"I said fuck off!"* Wilbur gave a quiet sniff, one he knew they couldn't hear.

*"Wilbur, are you in danger?"* Techno asked. *"I will break down this door=="*

"I'm not gonna fucking kill myself!" Wilbur shouted, voice going weaker. "Now kindly *fuck off!* If I'm so *tiring* to deal with during December, then fucking leave me alone!"

The two went quiet.

Wilbur buried his head under the covers to block out whatever it was they said next.

They left him alone after what felt like hours of listening to their muffled voices over the sounds of his silent sobs.

# **thunder dome // broken home // everybody dies alone**

## Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Children of God" by AJJ

(cw for implied suicide, funerals)

He must have passed out eventually, because the next time he awoke, it was nearly midnight.

Wilbur could still feel tear tracks on his face, his nose thick with remnants of his plight.

He swiped a sleeve over his nose, staring at the almost-midnight timestamp on his clock.

Wilbur watched in silence as the clock ticked over. 57... 58... 59...

The clock struck twelve.

Christmas Day.

Wilbur sneered at the clock. He rubbed at his eyes and looked away, only to nearly scream.

On the other side of his bed stood a darkened figure that couldn't have been any taller than Phil. Wilbur couldn't make out much other than that...

The figure did not speak.

Wilbur almost thought he was hallucinating it. "Hello?"

The figure did not move.

"You==" Wilbur faltered. "You're the Ghost of Christmas Future, right? I mean, Past, Present, Future?"

Nothing.

"Do you know Tommy? And Ranboo?"

The Ghost held out a hand and gestured him forth.

Wilbur hesitantly shed his blankets, stepping around to join the Ghost..

Gray mist swirled around his feet.

The Ghost looked up at him, the barest hint of facial features teasing him in the moonlight. It turned and moved to his door, pulling it open (wasn't it locked?) and disappearing into the darkened hallway.

Wilbur swallowed before he moved to leave his room.

---

And suddenly he was outside, surrounded by a mob of black, lit by a dull gray sky.

Grass didn't crunch beneath his feet, but he could see the field spread around them, blocked at the edges by near-barren trees and rotted wooden fences.

Wilbur looked over his shoulder to see the very house he was living in, white walls now a yellowed splotch. The bushes were now overgrown, the roof an inky stain against the green of the leaves.

(He'd never seen the house from this angle, he realized. Maybe they should do something with the fields...)

Wilbur turned back around to his front.

And his eyes landed on a coffin.

Techno was stood to the side of it, a pack of small cards in his hand. His pink hair was now cropped short, brushing his jawline and matching the pink tie he wore. He was more aged, now, wrinkles barely staining his features. Where Wilbur had once saw youth in his eyes, now all he saw was defeat.

He cleared his throat, eyes flicking up to glaze over the crowd. "Uh. Hello, everyone... Uh, welcome to the..." He gestured at the coffin. He sighed. "Yeah. Uh, thank you for coming. I'm sure he'd have wanted it."

Was this... Phil's funeral...? Where was Wilbur, then?

Techno cleared his throat. "Uh. Well, it's customary to give speeches at funerals, so... I'll go first. Uh..."

Wilbur glanced to his side to see a brunet that stared on listlessly. Burn scars marred his features, disfiguring his hands and coating his neck in scar tissue. He wore a brown jacket, with bits of fluff stuck around the hood.

"When Phil died, it was just me and Wilbur. We knew how to keep the company runnin', he made sure of that..."

Wilbur slowly turned his horrified gaze back to Techno.

"We, uh... we didn't exactly recover quickly, but we had each other. And we made do." He sniffed and moved the top flashcard to the bottom. "But... I'm sure you all know this, um... Wilbur *hated* Christmas with a passion that redefined the word *loathin'*."

A short chuckle rippled through the crowd before one person sniffed.

The barest hint of a smile played on Techno's face before it disappeared. "Every December, Wilbur would go into this funk, where everyone around him became nothing more than a nuisance. And normally, Phil was there to help.

"I remember one Christmas, where he said he'd==he'd wished he'd said no when Phil asked to adopt him." Techno licked his lips. "I would have decked him if Phil hadn't been there."

No one laughed.

"If it weren't for Phil, I'm sure we would have fallen apart sooner. But, uh..." Techno gave a light shake of his head. "He was always there. He kept the peace until the New Year, an' Wilbur would always apologize for what he said, an' everything would be fine==" Techno cut himself off when his voice broke, squeezing his eyes shut for a moment.

Horried, Wilbur looked back at the Ghost. "You're kidding."

The Ghost stared on.

Techno seemed to regather himself. "Without Phil there, Wilbur... spiraled. He started smoking, even though he had asthma. He tried a few different kinds of drugs, I think. He was cut out of Lovejoy when his bandmates found out... He tried to move out a few times, but every December, he'd always come back, because he couldn't *stand* it..."

Techno swiped a hand over his eyes before he switched cards again. "Every December, he'd come back here, and he'd stay with me, and we wouldn't celebrate Christmas, we'd just pretend it was literally any other time in the year. And every time, he kept showing up worse and worse... I think==" He let out a lifeless laugh. "I think one time, I even begged him to stay, if only for a few more months..."

The person beside Wilbur==Fundy, he realized==let out a sniff.

Techno's throat bobbed. "I remember another Christmas, where==I don't know, *somehin'* happened. Phil told me how tiring it was to deal with Wilbur, and he overheard, so he locked himself in his room. I swear to god, when Phil told me Wilbur wasn't opening his door... I always wondered to myself which Christmas was going to be Wilbur's last, and I thought for sure that was going to be it.

"Wilbur ended up shouting at us for what we'd said. And, in hindsight, I can't say we didn't deserve it, but I could barely sleep that night, beacuse I just kept thinking *he didn't do it then, but maybe he's changed his mind. Or maybe he lied and he's dying. Maybe he lied and he's already dead.*

"I wondered what Christmas was going to be his last," Techno said, eyes staring at nothing, knuckles white as he clutched his cards. "I finally got my answer."

"Can we go?" Wilbur gritted out to the Ghost, feeling frozen and helpless.

Techno squeezed his eyes shut and brought a hand to his face. His shoulders shook once before his chest stalled.

"*Wilbur*," called a soft voice.

Wilbur whipped around to see a woman standing there, in a dress as black as night, with a wide-brimmed hat of the same shade. She looked tired, her jet-black hair falling around her shoulders.

Wilbur furrowed his brows. "Kristin...?"

Kristin had been Phil's ex-wife, who had died one day in a mugging gone wrong. He'd only ever seen pictures of her...

"You can go now, Tubbo," Kristin said, gesturing to the side.

The Ghost of Christmas Future==Tubbo==turned and headed off.

Wilbur looked to see where Tubbo was headed to see Tommy and Ranboo shoving at each other. Faint shouts reached his ears, accompanied by a bark of laughter.

"Wilbur," Kristin began, smiling fondly up at him. "Hello. I don't think we've met."

Wilbur blinked. "Um. No, don't think so."

Kristin gave a huff of laughter. "Well, I'm Kristin, Phil's wife. I am the Goddess of Death. Phil and I met during my latest incarnation."

"Ex-wife," Wilbur corrected. "You died, didn't you?"

(He felt his jaw tighten when he heard a sob finally break from behind him.)

Kristin shrugged. "*Died* is one way to put it. But, I'm still here, aren't I?" She turned and beckoned him to follow her. "Come with me, away from all the crying."

Wilbur followed her to the fenceline, hearing Tommy squawk as Tubbo yelled something to him.

"So," Wilbur began, "this is my future...? I... I committed suicide?"

Kristin tilted her head. "I mean, yeah. You heard Techno, didn't you?"

"Sorry, I just..." Wilbur glanced over at the trio of teens. Tommy now wielded a scythe, brandishing it menacingly towards Tubbo and Ranboo.

("I was a farmer, bitch!" Tommy shouted. "So *I* get the creepy death scythe!")

Kristin gave a laugh. "No need to be sorry. Not to me, anyways... Are you happy with your future?"

"What?" Wilbur shook his head. "Fuck no. I don't want to commit suicide. And I don't want to hate Techno, and I don't want Phil to die!"

Kristin's smile faltered. "Yeah, I can't imagine that's a nice thing to go through... But, if it makes you feel any better, he'll be with me when he dies. In our own little world for eternity, where we can just hang out. I suppose you and Techno can come, too," she added jokingly as an afterthought.

"Oh, and the Ghosts. I think Phil would like them."

Wilbur looked back over to the spirits to see Tubbo now holding the scythe and staring Ranboo down.

("Tommy, why did you give him the creepy death scythe?!")

"Uh, cause it's *Tubbo* and I know better than to say no to Tubbo, *Ranboob*."

Wilbur looked back at the funeral, where Fundy had taken Techno's spot, He could barely make out Dream comforting Techno, Sapnap and George close by.

He felt his lips press into a thin line. "How do I fix it?"

"Whaddya mean?" Kristin asked.

Wilbur gestured at the funeral. "That. How do I fix it?"

Kristin blinked at him.

"How do I==" Wilbur stopped himself. "What do I have to do so I don't end up like *that*."

Kristin gave an easy shrug. "Oh, you already know that one, Wilbur."

Anger flared up in his veins. "I'm not gonna suddenly turn around and say I love Christmas=="

A laugh seemed to force itself from Kristin's throat. "*Christmas* doesn't matter, Wilbur!" she chuckled. "What matters is that you can't blame a holiday for every bad thing that's ever happened to you. Yeah, you did something shitty=="

Wilbur flinched at the reminder.

"--but that doesn't give you the right to be an intolerable dick every time December rolls around." Kristin shook her head.

Wilbur felt his lip curl. "I'm not going to another fucking therapist."

"You don't *have* to," Kristin reassured. "You just need to really *think* about your actions, so you can enjoy every year without ending it off on a bad note. You don't seriously think that being miserable for a month every year is *enjoyable*, do you?"

Wilbur felt himself shrink under her gaze. "But..."

"Instead of ruminating over the bad memories from a decade ago, why not make new, better ones?"

Wilbur tore his gaze away from where Fundy had collapsed into someone's arms. He looked down at the grass, brows furrowed.

"Wilbur." Kristin gently placed her hands on either side of his face. "You need help. And only you can decide where and when you get that help. My *suggestion* is that you start as soon as possible, alright?"

Wilbur swallowed a lump in his throat. He felt like a child after a nightmare when he admitted, "I'm scared."

He felt himself flush with shame, but Kristin's easy smile kept him pinned in place.

"That's alright," she said. "But *trying* is better than nothing."

A *whack!* Sounded throughout the clearing.

"*Kristiiiiin!*" whined the three.

Kristin took her hands away from Wilbur, looking back at the three. "What did you do now?"

"Ranboo broke the creepy death scythe!" Tommy called.

"I did not!" Ranboo protested. "You slammed it into the ground."

"Well, it wouldn't have broken if you'd let me hit you!"

Kristin chuckled, staring fondly at them. "Yeah, Phil will love them..."

Wilbur closed his eyes.

---

When he opened them, he was in his bedroom.

# he wants to find a better way to love his family

## Chapter Notes

chapter title from "Angel of Death" by AJJ

yes you read that title right. no it was not intentional. yes i think it's sweet that the fluffy resolution is called that :]

(cw for maybe implied mental breakdown? idk)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was around five-ish in the morning, according to the clock. Hints of sun filtered in from his window, highlighting the frame of his bed and the corkboard on his wall.

Wilbur blinked. He sat up, feeling his shirt stick to his back and chest in an unpleasant show of his nightmare.

(He was reminded that he had slept in sweaty sheets last night, so he'd technically just added a second layer. Gross.)

He swallowed dryly, his heart pounding distantly against his chest.

Wilbur sucked in a breath, hands shaking as he clutched the blanket.

---

Phil let out a chuckle when he saw the packaging of the present in his hand, glancing over at the couch, where Techno sat. He himself was in one of the armchairs, facing towards the kitchen. The movie *Elf* played on mute in front of them, subtitles flashing across the screen. "Techno, did you actually...?"

Techno shrugged. "Well, you did say you'd get one for yourself. And then you didn't."

Phil finished unwrapping the box, skimming over the picture of the keyboard, LEDs shining.

Techno moved his head as if to check for something. "Check the back."

Phil furrowed his brows and picked up the wrapping paper he'd dropped, turning it over to find a thin something taped to the back, also wrapped. He carefully tore off the paper, opening up what was revealed to be a trifolded piece of paper.

Techno couldn't help but grin when he saw Phil's jaw drop.

"*Mate*==" Phil laughed out excitedly. "This is from *September*! You didn't tell me for *three months* and printed out the email to tape to a Christmas present?!"

Techno raised his hands in surrender. "Listen, Phil, it's not my fault YouTube decided to email me in *September*."

Phil placed the paper to the side and reached to the side to pull Techno into a quick hug. "I'm so proud of you, mate..."

"Phil, quiet bein' sappy, you're ruinin' my image," Techno protested, leaning into the hug nonetheless.

Phil pulled away and sent Techno a grin, only for his eye to catch sight of someone standing just around the corner, a poofy yellow sweater barely visible in the light of the muted TV.

"Wilbur?"

Techno turned to see him, freezing at the sight.

Wilbur's throat bobbed. His voice was quiet and rough when he asked, "Am I really that unbearable?"

Phil was tempted to say yes. "Of course not, mate... Are you okay?"

Wilbur looked down at his hands, covered by his sweater sleeves, and began to fiddle with them.

Techno and Phil shared a look.

Techno looked back at Wilbur. "You, uh... wanna sit down?"

Wilbur risked a glance at the small stack of presents on the coffee table. He shuffled over to the other armchair and set himself down, curling his legs closer to him and returning his gaze to his hands.

Neither Phil nor Techno moved, waiting for some sort of ball to drop.

"You can, uh," Wilbur whispered. He gestured at the presents. "Continue. Sorry... Should I leave...?"

"No," Phil answered immediately. "No, it's just... surprising? We thought you hated...?"

Wilbur shrugged a shoulder. "Just... had a weird dream. And it made me think. I, uh... I don't want a dumb holiday to fuck anything up between us. So, I'm... I'm gonna try to get better."

Phil blinked, wide-eyed at Wilbur.

"One heck of a dream," Techno murmured.

The edges of Wilbur's mouth quirked up. "You could say that..."

Phil glanced around at the gifts, brows furrowed as he shifted in his seat. He carefully peeled the fluffy red blanket off his lap and stood. "I'll be back in a moment."

Wilbur didn't look up as Phil hurried around him, ascending up the creaky stairs.

Techno didn't mention the tear tracks staining Wilbur's cheeks.

Phil returned a moment later holding a small package and a pair of gloves. He held them out to Wilbur, who stared at them, confused.

"We were gonna give these to you later," Phil explained, "but I think that now's a more fitting time."

Wilbur blinked up at him.

"Just take 'em," Techno prompted, Wilbur slowly doing as instructed.

"I just think it would be a bit mean to make you watch as we open presents," Phil continued, "but..."

Wilbur tucked the objects closer to him, looking down to find the package was actually a pair of earbuds.

"You said they were out at the store," Techno said by way of explanation. "Phil got you the gloves though. Probably knit them himself, cause he's so old."

Phil sent him a look. "You can literally see the little plastic thing that connects them, mate."

"Um," Wilbur tried, "thanks. You can..." He gestured to the presents. "I'm, uh... I'll just be here..."

---

Christmas, as Wilbur found throughout the day, was... not as terrible as he remembered.

He got to drink hot chocolate, and they watched a 2D animated movie about the Grinch, and he got extra candy, and there were no train platforms or scrambling for a cubic inch of gritty cake, or being forced to watch as biological kids got to open presents while the foster kids got a small toy that was only a pound at Walmart.

Wilbur couldn't help but feel... guilty. Sad and guilty. He'd not only missed out on spending a whole *month* with Phil and Techno for *years*, but he'd made *them* feel bad for enjoying it.

All because he would rather mope in his room than at least *try* to...

(No, that wasn't fair to himself, he knew. But having waited so long wasn't fair to Techno and Phil...)

(Life just wasn't fair.)

Later that day, as they were eating dinner, Wilbur paused.

"Today was fun," he said. "I'm sorry I took so long to stop blaming Christmas for all my problems..."

"It's fine, mate," Phil reassured. "You're spending time with us now, and that's what matters."

Wilbur nodded, looking down at his food.

He'd tell them, eventually, what had happened that made him hate December. But for now... for now, he could let them enjoy their time with each other. With him.

*With* him. Finally.

## Chapter End Notes

WOOO WE'RE DONE JUST IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS!!! comment below what you got for christmas if you're reading this a bit after christmas!! :D

## End Notes

### [Deathlessness](#)

link w/o formatting: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/33321973>

Discord

link w/o formatting: N/A

EDIT FROM THE FUTURE: hmu on tumblr if you wanna join, having a public link hasn't done us much good recently

i'll mostly only be replying to longer/more complex comments, or comments with questions in them, otherwise the comment section is just going to be a bunch of me saying thank you. i still appreciate the comments! i'm just not going to respond to the shorter ones.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!